

Great Bay Siltation Commission Meeting

NHDES Pease Field Office, Portsmouth, NH
January 28, 2008, 1:30 PM

Members: Rep. Judith Spang, Commission Chair, Durham
Cynthia Copeland, Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Ted Diers, NH Coastal Program
Ellen Griffin Saas, Great Bay Marine, Inc.
Doug Grout, NH Fish & Game Department
Jennifer Hunter, NH Estuaries Project
Ray Konisky, The Nature Conservancy
Justin Richardson, Newington Conservation Commission
Tracy Shattuck, PDA – Division of Ports & Harbors
Fred Short, University of New Hampshire
Alison Watts, Newfields Conservation Commission
Peter Wellenberger, Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Other Attendees: David Funk, Great Bay Stewards
Christian Williams, NH Coastal Program

Summary:

Chairperson Spang asked the chairs of the commission's two subcommittees to update members on their progress toward completing the tasks identified in their work plans. Ray Konisky, chair of the "Effects of Sedimentation" ("effects") subcommittee, stated that the subcommittee continues to work to identify the environmental, recreational, commercial, and social impacts of siltation on the Great Bay Estuary. Tracy Shattuck, also of the effects subcommittee, stated that after reviewing bathymetric maps of Great Bay and its tributaries on the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) web site he had some of the maps reproduced. The maps depict water depths based on NOAA sounding data from 1913 and 1954. He expressed interest in using the maps in conjunction with more recent bathymetric data of Great Bay at its tributaries collected by UNH to determine whether Great Bay and its tributaries have become shallower since the early 20th century, and if so, at what rate(s). He stated that he would be contacting commission member Larry Ward of UNH to discuss the more recent UNH bathymetric survey data.

There was no update from the "Causes of Sedimentation" subcommittee.

Chairperson Spang then asked commission member Doug Grout of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to speak regarding the potential effects of siltation on fish and shellfish in Great Bay. Doug stated that the three primary effects of siltation on fish and shellfish would be through habitat alteration, gill irritation and smothering of fish eggs and oyster beds. Examples of habitat alteration include increased areas of mud or sand bottom types and decreased submerged aquatic vegetation productivity. Doug also presented recent and historic data depicting the abundance of fish and shellfish in Great Bay and its tributaries.

Chairperson Spang then asked the commission's two subcommittees to assemble and continue their efforts to address the issues identified in their work plans. The subcommittee workplans can be found on the commission's web page, hosted by the New Hampshire Coastal Program, at http://des.nh.gov/Coastal/ocean_policy.html.

Chairperson Spang polled members regarding their preference for the next meeting date. Due to difficulties finding an available location for the next meeting, Chairperson Spang informed members that they would be notified in the near future of the next meeting date, time and location. This information as well as meeting minutes will be posted on the commission's web page.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.